

# THE GRAMOPHONE

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## EDITORIAL

IT would be premature to assume that THE GRAMOPHONE is a success; but we have received such a large number of encouraging letters that we may be allowed to think that the paper will soon establish itself as a very great success. Our chief difficulty is going to be getting ourselves known, and, when we are known, getting ourselves distributed. Modern commercial conditions are not ideal for a small private enterprise like ours, and we shall have to rely for some time to come on personal recommendation from readers to possible readers. It will help us very much if use is made of the subscription forms printed at the end of each number. I know personally what a bore it is filling up forms and sending off postal orders, but a paper like ours depends so much on what we may expect in the future that I must earnestly beg our enthusiastic supporters to help us in this way.

I know that the personal note is unduly emphasised in these early numbers, but that is a feature which will gradually disappear, and with each new number I hope to eliminate a little more of myself. I am also aware that we have not yet made any real attempt to cater for those interested in the technic of the instrument. But this side of gramophone literature is having our attention, and in the near future we shall devote a number almost exclusively to a consideration of instruments, soundboxes and needles.

I do not want to intrude here upon the survey of the April, May and June records which we shall make in our next number; but I cannot let pass the occasion to congratulate the Vocalion Company on their unusually interesting supplements of the last quarter. These would be noteworthy if only for the reappearance of Madame Gerhardt, but they have also given us an opportunity of hearing Miss Evelyn Scotney, an Australian soprano of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York. Her voice has a good deal of the quality of Madame Galli-Curci's, and unless I were to indulge in angelic comparisons I could say no more.

His Master's Voice has now given us His Majesty's Voice and Her Majesty's Voice. We venture with the greatest respect to congratulate both the august performers on the success of their record as a record, which, judged on its merits alone, is a remarkably fine piece of recorded speaking.

*Compton Mackenzie*

# THE DEATH OF OPERA

## *A Plea for some Charming Ghosts*

I AM tempted to say that an appreciation of coloratura singing indicates more accurately than the first grey hair the approach of middle-age. Coloratura sopranos are to the man of forty what blackbirds and nightingales are to young poets. In the heyday of youth we find such feminine exhibitions faintly embarrassing. I was talking to a young friend of mine the other day, who assured me that the *Barber of Seville* was the most boring opera he had ever heard. And I remembered that I too when I first heard it found it tiresome, and that la Tetrizzini singing "Una voce poco fa" (H.M.V. 2-053046) had once seemed to me the most exasperating item in an exasperating performance. Youth prefers sopranos like Mme. Destinn, and I am not going to declare that youth is wrong. At the same time, I firmly believe that what we must call the failure of opera to attract the public nowadays is chiefly due to the complete neglect of what for so many years stood for opera in England. It seems to me perfectly clear that Leoncavallo, Mascagni, and Puccini between them have eclipsed the gaiety of nations. They have written entirely for young people; and opera, if it is going to be a practical success, requires the support of the middle-aged and the old.

I set Wagner entirely on one side in this discussion, because for me, and I should be inclined to add for Wagner himself, most of the vocal intrusions are a nuisance.

What seems to me the fatal mistake of modern opera is its pitiable attempt to be realistic. I would go so far as to say that, with the exception of *Carmen* and *Pagliacci*, modern operas have either spoilt good dramas with second-rate music or bolstered up wretched plays with slightly better music. When to the folly of pseudo-realism is added the imbecility of translating such results into English, the failure of opera glares. It is impossible to sing "Come to the window, the view's much better since they pulled down the houses opposite," and this, the words all too horribly clear, is what I heard one evening at Drury Lane in an English translation of Charpentier's *Louise*. Personally, I hate that particular opera even in French. I regard it as pretentious and sentimental, and when the French set out to be pretentious and sentimental they can outdo any other nation. Now, it is just conceivable that a very young man might sit in the stalls and accept the bit of dialogue quoted above as a rasher of life handed to him over the heads of the orchestra; but you cannot expect a man of forty to stomach such stringy bacon.

After studying the catalogues of the recording companies and reports of meetings of gramophone societies, and after making discreet enquiries about comparative sales I have come to the firm conclusion that the English as a nation is still as much devoted to opera as any in the world. I read in an Italian paper the other day the account of a conference of operatic bigwigs in Milan summoned to discuss the problem why Italian opera was ceasing to attract. I can give them the answer right away. Italian opera is ceasing to attract, because Italian opera nowadays means Puccini, Leoncavallo, and Mascagni everywhere except in Italy itself; indeed I might go farther and say that in England it means Puccini only; not even Verdi holds his own here, and for the forthcoming season of the British Opera Company *Aida* is the only opera of Verdi's considered worth while producing.

I am not at all anxious to be converted to the theory that the English nation is to be identified with the lost tribes of the Children of Israel; but the East wind that serves British taste is significant; *Chu Chin Chow*, *Aida*, *Kismet*, *Samson and Delilah*, *The Garden of Allah*, Mr. Kipling's Indian stories, those horrible *Indian Love Lyrics*, the popularity of *The Merchant of Venice* among Shakespearean plays, and the popularity of *Aladdin* among Christmas pantomimes spring to my mind as examples of this orientation. Looking back, I remember *Lalla Rookh*; and the outstanding success of the *Mikado*, among Gilbert and Sullivan productions. I ponder the perfectly ridiculous esteem in which that perfectly ridiculous book *Vathek* is held by highbrows; worse still, that detestable series of mock Sanskrit stories which begins with *A Heifer in the Corn* or some such silly title, and perhaps worst of all the respect accorded to the dronings of Sir Rabin-dranath Tagore.

Of course, if we are going to have what is called old-fashioned opera in England, we must have the singers, and at the moment they are all in America. But I am prepared to wager that we should hear no more about the failure of opera if we could have the following repertoire: *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Pasquale*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Ernani*, *La Favorita*, *Il Flauto Magico*, *La Forza del Destino*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Norma*, *Nozze di Figaro*, *Pescatori di Perle*, *Puritani*, *Rigoletto*, *Il Seraglio*, *La Sonnambula*, with *Falstaff*, *Mefistofele* and *Otello*, and perhaps occasionally on a Saturday night *Robert le Diable* or *L'Africaine*. No Puccini, no Gounod. Everything to be sung in Italian, including the Bizet and Meyerbeer

operas. I should want Mme. Galli-Curci for Bellini and Donizetti; Mlle. Bori for Mozart; Stracciari and De Luca for my baritones; and for tenors Fleta, Bonci, and Martinelli. A good ballet would be essential; and, by the way, it is very significant that, when I ask people what ballet most remains in their memory of that first visit of the Russian Ballet before the war, it is nearly always *Les Sylphides*. Now *Les Sylphides* was the kind of ballet that they liked in 1840; the melodies were mazurkas and waltzes of Chopin; and Chopin was inspired by Bellini.

We read a lot of nonsense nowadays about Bellini, and why we read a lot of nonsense is that most of our musical critics have no idea what good singing is, nor incidentally what good opera is. I should like to have them all shut up for a week with a gramophone, for it is really impossible to begin to understand anything about singing until one has studied singing on the gramophone. The trouble with so much of the written criticism of opera is the inability of critics to perceive that the opera is a fundamentally ridiculous art form. When a mighty and original creative genius like Wagner arises, one begins to believe that some development may be possible; but such a development will have to be on the same scale as Wagner, and anyway it is no use asking canaries to sing music written for elephants.

Personally I think it is a waste of time for any composer to write opera nowadays,

just as I think it is a waste of time for any poet to write an epic. The whole trouble is that we are obsessed and oppressed by realism, or what is called realism, and the more an artist tries to be realistic, whether in music or literature or painting, the more scientific men go one better. The fact of the matter is that "real life" is too complicated for artists at present, and the sooner they grasp this the better. I sympathize with modern composers who try to compete with the orgy of sound all round them; I sympathize with modern painters whose earliest experiences of colour have been derived from journeys in tubes; I sympathize with modern poets whose lyrical groans have to compete with the whistling of locomotives; and I sympathize most of all with modern dramatists. They are involved in too many paradoxes. Music to assert itself has become representational; painting to assert itself has become non-representational; drama to assert itself has discarded the dramatic. As for the poets, unable to assert themselves, they depend on the assertions of critics for the preposterous legend that we live in a poetic age. At any rate in opera let us get back to honest tinsel and avowed pinchbeck. It may be that, when the ingenuity of modern science has temporarily exhausted itself, our musical successors will be able to deal adequately with a life that for the moment is overwhelming us.

Z.

## LIST OF SELECTED RECORDS—II

**COLUMBIA.**—7138.—Casals ('Cello), *Air for G String* (Bach).

**H.M.V.**—D.645.—Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse (Harpsichord), *The Harmonious Blacksmith. Suite No. 5* (Handel).

**H.M.V.**—D.338.—Westminster Cathedral Choir, *Responses, Agnus Dei and Preface with Sanctus* from the *Mass Aeterna Christi* (Palestrina).

**VOCALION.**—D.02004.—D.02008.—London String Quartet, *Quartet in D. Op. 18, No. 3* (Beethoven).

**H.M.V.**—054070.—Caruso and Scotti (Tenor and Baritone), *Solenne in quest' ora* from "*La Forza del Destino*" (Verdi).

**H.M.V.**—D.502.—Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, conducted by Sir Landon Ronald, *Siegfried's Funeral March* from "*Götterdämmerung*" (Wagner).

**COLUMBIA.**—7182.—Barrientos (Soprano), *Regnava nel silenzio. Cavatina* from "*Lucia di Lammermoor*" (Donizetti).

**H.M.V.**—2-054069.—Gluck and Homer (Soprano and Contralto), *Mira, o Norma ai tuoi ginocchi* from "*Norma*" (Bellini).

**COLUMBIA.**—A.5197.—Boninsegna (Soprano), *Casta Diva, and Bello a me ritorna* from "*Norma*" (Bellini).

**H.M.V.**—2-052077.—Caruso (Tenor), *Fenesta che lucive* (Neapolitan Song).

**H.M.V.**—2-07965.—Zimbalist (Violin), *Harlequin's Serenade* from "*Les Millions d'Arlequin*" (Drigo).

**H.M.V.**—2-052130.—De Luca (Baritone), *Di Provenza il mar il suol* from "*La Traviata*" (Verdi).

**H.M.V.**—052356.—Chaliapin (Bass), *Vi ravviso, o luoghi ameni* from "*La Sonnambula*" (Bellini).

**H.M.V.**—D.574.—British Symphony Orchestra conducted by Adrian Boult. *Rout* (Arthur Bliss).



# The Gramophone as a Factor in the Musical Education of the Amateur

THERE is a large body of opinion in favour of the supposition that a multiplication of facilities decreases appetite. However delightful such a speculation may be to smoke one's pipe upon, there is one that will appeal much more to Lord Greville's man in the street, and that is to take what opportunities the gods send us. The fat terrier who, head on one side, hears his master's voice proceeding from the whirling disc, is to many the promise of an open door to musical knowledge.

A piece of music is essentially something which we like better the better we know it. Before the advent of the gramophone the opportunities offered to the average amateur for getting intimately acquainted with anything in music but the simplest tunes, such as one could hear five or six times a day on a barrel organ over a period of seven or eight years, were very scanty. In the case of classical music, symphonies, quartets, opera, etc., the most he could hope was to hear them two or three times a year, and if he was unable to read a score, a state of things quite common amongst very real lovers of music, this gave him only the slightest chance of becoming acquainted to any great extent with the works he loved. His instincts told him that here was something fine, but that this marvel appeared, vibrated, and was gone after such a short time, left his memory with a task too hard in hoping to recall it. A few main themes remained and a general sense of pleasure and that was all.

No musician would ever be so hardy as to suggest that listening to mechanical music should ever supersede attending the human performance; at the same time in the matter of getting acquainted with music the gramophone is going to be more and more a necessary part of our musical life.

It is a curious chance, curious philosophically, though natural to physics, that the most complex and most finished type of music is exactly that which the gramophone records best. I refer to string quartets. One's average knowledge of a string quartet, even when one feels pretty familiar with it, is so slight compared to what it can be with the aid of modern facilities that the comparison is as black with white. The outside parts, first violin and 'cello, are all that are consciously comprehended, while such details as the second violin and viola are only a vague filling when they play no leading melody. Now supposing, which is not improbable, that the amateur has some slight ability in reading only one line in music, this is what he can do. He can put on some simple quartet record and while it is playing follow it with the score. His primary instinct will be to follow the first violin only, and

while there is something to be said for following the bass first, there is still more to be said, as enlightened educationists will tell us, for obeying our instincts in this matter. We will, therefore, let him start off with the first violin. He must be careful to disentangle it from the rest and, if at moments the second violin rises superior, he must hold on to the fact that it is not his violin. In this way he can almost feel that he is playing the first violin part, a delightful sensation, and he will be astonished at the range of his technique. When he knows the first violin part thoroughly he can start on the 'cello part, after which I should suggest that the viola will be the easiest of the middle parts owing to its distinctive tone. The second violin can be studied last. In this way it is comparatively easy for anyone with no very great musical learning to get acquainted quickly, and in an intimate manner, with that which offers him otherwise a mere nodding acquaintance. The same practice can of course be followed with other combinations, but a large orchestral score is liable to become blurred in places and is in any case a difficult problem. There is a good selection of published chamber music the learning of which cannot fail to enlarge one's appreciation when it comes to hearing the human performance.

It is not, however, merely in learning the actual music that the gramophone is useful. The student of music may find in it a great help to the study of interpretation generally. Although listening to a record of Busoni is not quite like hearing him play, we can study from it almost the whole effect of his technique. The phrasing, the *tempi*, the loudness and softness of the passages are all faithfully recorded and we can play it as often as we like. The Casals record of that air of Bach's, incorrectly known as the "Air on the G String" (Columbia 7138), is a wonderful piece of work and affords us a splendid lesson in Bach playing.

There is yet another lesson to be learnt from listening to the gramophone, but it is one which is reserved to the few, and that is self criticism by listening to one's own records. It is said that a famous singer corrected an entirely unsuspected tendency to flatness in this way.

How useful it would be to a member of a quartet to hear his part in proportion to the others from the listeners' standpoint. Admitted that certain amateurs might receive such a shock as to prevent them playing again for a few months, yet the ultimate benefit would be very great.

Used wisely, used to augment and not to displace our other faculties, there is a great future for the gramophone as an educational factor in music.

ELSOM CARTER.

# A Musical Autobiography (continued)

By Compton Mackenzie

I SUPPOSE that most children find playing with the piano-stool a pleasanter diversion than playing on the piano. I certainly did. The particular game I liked to play on our piano-stool was to twist it round on the upward grade with sufficient accuracy to bring it to the very top of the spiral without making it fall from its pedestal to the floor. This seemed to me of much greater importance than the level performance of a scale in C major.

I cannot remember now the name of actually the first tune I learnt to play; but I remember clearly that the second was *Le Carnaval de Venise*, and the third *Rosalie, the Prairie Flower*. I used to begin practising at half-past-six in summer and at seven in winter; an abominable business that practising by candlelight, when I look back on it. I found a device at last to make the time pass more quickly by putting a book on the music-stand, and I must have read many chapters of Henty while my fingers raced up and down the piano playing scales. I can hear now my governess, coming out on the landing of the floor below, clapping her hands, and asking me how many more times I was going to play the scale in C major. There was one bad moment when she came upstairs rather quietly and I had only just time to hide the book I was reading inside the piano, where it lay heavily on the middle register. The nursery piano was a Brinsmead, the front of fretted walnut and pleated crimson silk. The drawing-room piano was a Metzler of yellow satin-wood, which had a curiously muffled touch, as if the soft pedal were always down. That question of pedals was a great injustice of early practising; the loud pedal was only permitted very rarely and the soft pedal never. In fact, it was not until I learnt *The Retreat March*, of which I have already spoken, that I was allowed to use the soft pedal, by which time I was fourteen; and a month or two later I gave up the piano altogether.

I cannot remember what short pieces succeeded *Rosalie, the Prairie Flower*; they were all in an old marble-backed volume which probably belonged to my grandmother. However, I remember well the first comparatively long piece I learnt. It was called *Swing Song*, and the number of breathless adventures I went through with Henty, swinging on the notes of that Brinsmead, I should be sorry to have to count. You can imagine what a perfect rendering I gave of this lullaby or barcarolle or whatever it was, while reading *For Name and Fame, or Through Afghan Passes*. The *Swing Song* was succeeded by a composition called *The Lorelei*;

and, though this was a kind of early programme music, its composer never meant it to be played to the accompaniment of *With Pike and Dyke*.

Another disgusting ceremony of that period was for my brother and my sister and myself to sing a kind of glee called *Johnny Smoker*, in the rendering of which a variety of instruments had to be imitated. We felt—at any rate my brother and I felt—that we were being made fools of by having to imitate the flute and fiddle in onomatopoeic German, and we strongly objected to my sister's feminine conscientiousness in trying to sing as well as possible. How we hated *Johnny Smoker*!

What else can I remember of music about this period? There were school concerts, of course, when cherubs in Eton jackets and white silk ties sang *Cherry Ripe* to boisterous applause from the gallery. I remember one young cherub, the most cherubic of them all, singing that particular song most beautifully. He is now a distinguished Treasury official and a C.B., whose business it is to make us pay the piper instead of piping to us himself.

When I was twelve, we went to Scarborough for the summer holidays, where old Meyer Lutz conducted the Spa orchestra, and I remember being much impressed by the information that he had composed a *pas-de-quatre* to which we all danced in those days (H.M.V. C.1006). I can see him now on that sunny promenade, walking round and genially shaking hands with everybody in the intervals of conducting, and I can see Phil May beside him with a red nose and slightly tilted bowler hat.

At that period I was in the full tide of collecting everything from stamps to famous cricketers, and for a brief period I collected musical instruments, not, I need scarcely add, the instruments themselves, but their names and the ability to identify them. I remember that there was one that always eluded me called, as I thought, the orfoclide, but actually of course the ophielaide. I never managed to identify the ophielaide, and I doubt very much if even in those days it was still used in any band. The only illustration of one I know is in Mr. Cecil Forsyth's book on orchestration. Of all instruments the one I was most proud of collecting above my companions' heads was the bass clarinet; the oboe and the cor anglais, even the bombardon and the double bassoon were poor trophies compared with the bass clarinet. When the band was not playing on the Spa, it was considered a meet and daring thing to climb up into the bandstand and twang through its baize cover



the strings of the double-bass; and even more daring to strike the kettle-drum. I would have given much to blow once upon the bass clarinet.

Presently, however, the interest of collecting instruments was supplanted by the delight of listening to pierrots on the sands, and I remember that one song called *You can't leave me*, Charlie filled me with such enthusiasm that I was not content until I had actually bought a copy of it. The following Christmas I sang its thirteen or fourteen verses right through as my contribution to the Christmas entertainment of the family gathering that year. The song was about a man who was apparently trying to get rid of his wife by most unscrupulous methods. I can only remember one verse now about their going out together on the sea and of his pushing her in:

You can't lose me, Charlie, no you can't lose me, Charlie,

You thought you wouldn't grab me, but the devil wouldn't hab me,

You can't lose me, 'deed you can't!

It was evidently some kind of a coon song to judge from the *hab* for have. My young brother's choice—he always had to do the same as I did, although he was two years younger—was a song called *The Dandy Coloured Coon*. For some reason or other both he and I imagined that dandy coloured was a hyphenated word, and as there was a picture of a yellow-faced man in a grey top-hat on the cover we supposed that dandy coloured meant that precise nankeen of the gentleman's complexion.

Neither of these songs was fraught with much spiritual uplift. Spiritual uplift I got from *After the Ball is over*. It was issued with words and music as an advertisement of Beecham's Pills. Then there was *Two Little Girls in Blue*, and a song about a maid with sunny chestnut hair who lived in an old garden, which had two lines:

"I remember, I remember, 'tis a lifetime since we met,

But her sweet face pure and simple in my memory lingers yet."

Life's fretful fever was already upon me.

A musical confession would not be complete without some reference to the dancing-class. My earliest memory is of the one at a Kindergarten, to which I was sent in a black velvet suit with a Vandyke collar. I remember being laughed at—I must have been about five or six—by magnates of seven and eight in white tops. Oh, to wear a white top! I thought on my way home in the dusk of a winter's afternoon; and when the following week I left at five-and-twenty minutes past two for the dancing-class I decided, that even if it cost me some physical pain, I must achieve a white top, so I flung myself down in the gutter and successfully ruined for ever

that black velvet suit, and not only the black velvet suit, but my knees, which were badly cut and grazed by the kerbstone. It was not considered economical to buy me another velvet suit, and the following week I was in a white top like the rest. I can remember nothing much else of that earliest dancing class. But I do remember very well the dancing class at my preparatory school, which was presided over by a gentleman in evening dress with a crimson silk handkerchief stuck in the opening of his waistcoat. He was a fierce old gentleman with a face as red as his handkerchief sometimes, but he was an extremely good dancing-master. Even now when I dance the Ladies' Chain, I seem to feel his fiddle-bow banging me on the head if I hesitate which hand to offer. He had a dreadful habit, if one were dancing well, of fetching one out into the middle of the room to show the other boys how it should be done, during which time he used to play a very rapid *pas seul* on his violin. He had an equally horrid habit of fetching one out into the room if one did it very badly, so that one never escaped these solos. We learnt in the hall of Colet Court, which is as large as the hall of some public schools, and I can tell you that it took something to have to walk across that space of bare floor to invite one of the little girls sitting demurely on the other side to dance. One was not allowed to slouch across and mutter; one had to walk, as we thought, mincingly up to the lady of one's choice, bow deeply, and ask in clear accents: "May I have the pleasure of the next dance?" Unless this ritual was perfectly fulfilled, one was banged violently with the fiddle-bow.

I am glad to think, looking back on that dancing-class, that I was constant for quite three years to one little girl—I shall be ungallant if I say that she was a year or two senior to myself, but I think she was—who wore a salmon-coloured accordion-pleated frock of some stuff like nun's veiling, with white sleeves, and on special occasions such a beautiful dress of amber silk as even to this day makes amber silk almost my favourite material. To some of these dancing-classes, as I remember them, old pupils used to come, not to learn steps, but to dance grandly at the close of the evening; and I think it must have been to win a smile from my accordion-pleated charmer that one December night I and another knight-errant thought what a fine deed it would be to throw all the silk hats we found in the cloak-room out into the snow. At any rate we did so.

There was a dance in those days called the Circassian Circle which involved meeting everybody in turn round the room; and I can remember the emotion after a lovers' quarrel of seeing over my shoulder the inevitable hand-clasp coming nearer and nearer, she dancing with some loathed rival and I dancing with some despised and modest little

girl, as we drew together from the two poles of the ball-room, and the reconciliation, and the final gallop together before going home. The sad thing is that I cannot remember one single tune to which we danced except that *pas-de-quatre* to which I have already alluded.

The happy day on which I was told that I could give up the piano was, I regret to say, as far as I was concerned, a complete emancipation from any kind of music. From that time on for many years music bored me profoundly. To be in a room and hear somebody invited to play something filled me with dejection, and I cannot remember a single performance that gave me the least pleasure. Of course, there were the usual songs of the year, but the sharp impressions of childhood had already been blunted, and these songs succeeded one another so rapidly that they ceased to have the least significance. I did enjoy Gregorian chants, but how far that was due to any musical appreciation and how far to a pleasurable consciousness that they were painful to people of Protestant sympathies, it is hard to say.

It is not worth while giving a list of the hymn tunes that appealed to me in childhood, because the same tunes appeal to nearly everybody. I do not remember from my eighth year onward any hymn-tune that I could consider peculiarly my own choice. Looking back now on those we liked, I see clearly why *The Church's One Foundation* should be a success, but for the life of me I cannot understand why a lot of little boys of ten should revel in *Art thou Weary, art Thou Languid?* I can understand the attraction of *Oh, Happy Band of Pilgrims*, but I am bothered if I can see why one should have enjoyed *Pleasant are Thy Courts above*. Certain hymns, like *From Greenland's Icy Mountains* have such colour in the words that one grasps their appeal to childhood; but why was number 220, of which I cannot remember the first line, but in which occurs the line *Till Moons shall wax and wane no more*, an attractive tune? When I think of it now, it seems peculiarly tiresome. Without going so far as Pythagoras I do believe that the numbers of hymns possessed a kind of mystical importance, and I can well remember the thrill in church of seeing the chosen boy emerge from the choir to put up the cardboard numbers on the hymn-board. The procedure had the same kind of fascination that drawing the numbers of a lottery has for me now.

The two earliest hymns I remember are *Once in Royal David's City* and *There is a Green Hill far away*. The latter stays in one's mind as a piece of landscape, and since I—I suppose like most

children—thought that without a city wall meant that there was no city wall round it, and did not associate it in the least with any proximity to a city, it conveyed a picture of extreme remoteness and resembled one of those pleasurable hills seen along the horizon behind such seaside resorts as Folkestone. *Once in Royal David's City* is a much earlier memory and goes back to the very dim beginnings of my recollections; so much did it impress itself upon me with some curious polychromatic pattern that even to this day I cannot really break up the words into individual significations, but perceive the whole hymn as I might look back at a Persian rug, with purple slightly predominating in the colour scheme; and the melody to which it was sung has of course the same prismatic quality.

To leave hymns and come back to my progress in music. The next landmark was one night, a month before my seventeenth birthday, when I went to midnight mass at the Carmelite Church, Kensington, and heard the *Incarnatus* sung by a high tenor. I believe it was the *Incarnatus* from Mozart's *Twelfth Mass*. It was certainly Mozart, and it struck me, perhaps almost for the first time in my life, that there really was something in music after all. This, also, was to prove a fugitive association, and I was soon back in my rooted dislike of music. Then somewhere about the middle of my eighteenth year I went to *Tannhauser*.

I had already heard many operas, all of which had bored me hopelessly. I remember the amazement with which it dawned on me that people really might enjoy an opera. I should like to be able to add that from this moment my estrangement with music was at an end; but *Tannhauser*, like that *Incarnatus* of Mozart, was an isolated experience, of which nothing came. I fancy now that my enjoyment of it was entirely dramatic and had nothing to do with any growth in musical taste. And yet, although that performance of *Tannhauser* remained unique, it did bequeath to me the right to claim, with that comic self-importance of adolescent taste—a self-importance out of which, alas, too many people never grow—that without caring much for music I did enjoy Wagner, so that, when a month or two after this performance I made friends with a young man who played astonishingly well by ear, and who might easily have been a really great pianist had he but known how to work, I used when he sat down at the piano to ask him to play Wagner. He would sometimes try to lead me away from Wagner, and grudgingly I would admit that the *Waldstein Sonata* of Beethoven and Chopin's *Ballade in A Flat* (H.M.V. D.262) did give me a mild pleasure.



# GRAMOPHONE CELEBRITIES—I.

## *Galli-Curci*

IN this series of articles it is intended to classify the records available in England of some of the more important gramophone celebrities. The object of this classification is to save the purchaser trouble and disappointment in making a collection of records. Few people have the time, opportunity or strength of mind to go through, say, the 170 odd records of Caruso in order to find out which are the best twenty.

In these lists we shall divide the records of each artist into about five classes. Only the very best will go into Class 1—and only those which the writer of the article considers should never have been issued will be put into Class 5.

Within each class the arrangement will be roughly into what the writer considers the order of merit. This arrangement evidently cannot be anything final. The same judge will have different opinions at different times, and equally good judges would differ widely. But even though they were unable entirely to agree with a candid friend who had heard the records be discussed many times and under various conditions, yet most people would be grateful for advice from such a friend. We offer ourselves in this capacity to the readers of THE GRAMOPHONE.

Madame Galli-Curci was born in Milan in the year 1889 and was trained as a pianist. She first became really famous as a singer in 1916, when she made her first appearance in Chicago. Since then she has sung principally at the Metropolitan Opera House at New York, and at Chicago.

As a singer she is said to have been self-taught, but a statement of this kind need not be taken literally. She shows a perfect acquaintance with the traditional manner of singing the great arias of the past, and this implies a teacher. The young girl who, with no training whatever, gets up and sings the most difficult arias with a perfection that puts to shame the greatest prima donna is probably not to be found outside of romantic fiction.

The greatest soprano voices are rare—they occur about once in a generation. The last two generations have had Jenny Lind and Patti, and I believe that Madame Galli-Curci has the soprano voice of this generation.

Our parents and grandparents in describing the voices of Jenny Lind and of Adelina Patti used to speak of their unearthly sweetness and appeal; and it is just this sweetness and appeal that take one most on listening for the first time to any of Madame Galli-Curci's more characteristic records, this and a certain roundness and maturity in the voice.

The most characteristic records, in my opinion,

are those in which she sings the songs that delighted the hearts of our grandmothers—"Qui la voce sua soave," "Come per me sereno," and the rest. There is a well-known engraving of Jenny Lind standing on the bridge over the millstream, with a flower in her hand, singing "Ah, non credea mirarti si presto estinto o fiore"; and Patti sang the same songs. It is records of these arias by Bellini that I have put at the head of my list.

Beside the quality of the voice, there is shown in these records an extremely delicate sense for melody—the phrasing is perfect. I know of no other records of these songs that do not suffer by being played after these; no other singer seems able to bring out the expressiveness of the melodies in quite this inevitable way, so that after listening to some of the Bellini arias one is inclined to say to oneself, "How delighted Bellini would have been to have heard his own melodies for the first time, perhaps as he had dreamed they might be."

The technical skill shown in the management of the voice continually delights and surprises one afresh. This singer seems to sing as naturally as a bird, with as little sense of effort. Her highest notes come out round and full, with absolute ease and sweetness; the ornaments, trills and cadenzas have an evenness and finish, suggest a detachment that only the most perfect control of the breath and voice can give. The delicious acrobatic feats of agility that her voice performs in some of these records make one inclined to compare her to Heifetz, that master of another technique.

Next on the list after Bellini's arias I have put some records of "La Traviata."

Madame Galli-Curci is not at her best in what is called dramatic music. She is a coloratura soprano, and coloratura singing takes the listener to a region where the emotions of life are allowed to enter only when they have been purified and refined to a kind of essence. Verdi, until later certainly than "La Traviata," was a writer of this kind of music, and it would be difficult to imagine a more perfect rendering of "La Traviata" than these few records. But when Madame Galli-Curci attempts Puccini in "Un Bel di vedremo," she descends from her sphere into a work-a-day and dusty world. The beauty of her voice remains, but it is unable to create any illusion. The actual presence of a personality like that of Destinn might persuade even the cleverest of us that this brass was really gold, but Madame Galli-Curci's voice is an acid that reveals it even to the dullest for what it is.

In the first class are to be found also such arias as the mad scene from "Lucia" and "Dov'è



l'Indiana bruna," which constitute the main part of the repertory of every coloratura soprano. At one time "Caro Nome" was available, but I believe that the mould was broken by accident and it has been withdrawn. It should certainly be done again.

The question of concerted numbers is a difficult one. In Class 1, beside the two duets from "La Traviata," I have included "Piangi, piangi fanciulla" from "Rigoletto." The great quartet from the same opera I have put into Class 2, not because I don't think it a beautiful record, but because it is not first of all a Galli-Curci record, and although she sings wonderfully in it, yet a collector of her records might be misled by finding it in Class 1.

It should be remembered that the records in Class 2 are in Class 2 of the Galli-Curci records only. Most of them are enchanting, and their quality is above that of the best that almost any other singer can give us.

Class 3 contains some pleasing but on the whole less important records, while into Class 4 I have put the few things that this singer has given us that seem to me to have little interest. *Crépuscule* is not worthy of a great voice, and Madame Galli-Curci's singing of "Home Sweet Home" leaves me wondering what I should have felt about Patti's invariable final number. There are no records for Class 5.

It is to be regretted that His Master's Voice, who issue all the records of this singer, have given us only one record in the first six months of 1923. At this rate, even though she is still a young woman, her voice may have begun to lose its freshness before we have had her renderings of even the very finest of the arias particularly suited to her. We have not had the "Queen of the Night" music, nor "Casta Diva," nor "Bello a me ritorna," nor "Caro Nome." Indeed, it would be easy to name twenty coloratura pieces of the highest order that she has not made records of.



Galli-Curci

The Editor has added a few notes to my list, showing at what points he disagrees with my arrangement. I had revised my opinion of one or two of the records as the result of argument, and our main outstanding difference is with regard to the "Hymn to the Sun." I cannot regard the only Mozart number as a success and have left it in Class 3.

## GALLI-CURCI RECORDS

### CLASS 1.

- <sup>1</sup>Ah, non credea mirarti from "La Sonnambula" (Bellini).
- Come per me sereno from "La Sonnambula" (Bellini).
- Sovra il sen la man mi posa from "La Sonnambula" (Bellini).
- Qui la voce sua soave from "I Puritani" (Bellini).
- Una voce poco fa from "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" (Rossini).
- Ah! fors'è lui from "La Traviata."
- Sempre libera degg'io folleggiare from "La Traviata" (Verdi).
- Addio del passato bei sogni ridenti from "La Traviata" (Verdi).
- Dite alla giovine from "La Traviata" (duet) (Verdi).
- Imponete. Non amarlo ditegli from "La Traviata" (duet) (Verdi).
- Ardon gl'incensi from "Lucia di Lammermoor" (Donizetti).
- Quel guardo, il cavaliere from "Don Pasquale" (Donizetti).
- <sup>2</sup>Comme autrefois dans la nuit sombre from "Pêcheurs de Perles" (Bizet).
- Io son Titania from "Mignon" (Thomas).
- Dov'è l'Indiana bruna? from "Lakmé" (Delibes).
- Piangi, piangi fanciulla from "Rigoletto" (Verdi).
- C'est l'histoire amoureuse from "Manon Lescaut" (Auber).
- Air with variations (Proch).
- Charmant oiseau from "La Perle de Brésil" (David).
- <sup>3</sup>Ombra Leggera from "Dinorah" (Meyerbeer).

### CLASS 2.

- Solveig's Song from "Peer Gynt" (Greig).
- Nella Calma from "Roméo et Juliette" (Gounod).
- Caro mio ben (Giordani).

- La Vilanelle (Dell'Acqua).
- La Capinera (Benedict).
- <sup>4</sup>Hymne au Soleil from "Coq D'or" (Rimsky-Korsakov).
- Echo Song (Bishop).
- Un di, se ben rammentomi from "Rigoletto" (quartet) (Verdi).

### CLASS 3.

- <sup>5</sup>Non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio from "Le Nozze di Figaro" (Mozart).
- <sup>6</sup>Un bel di vedremo from "Madama Butterfly" (Puccini).
- Messaggero Amoro (Chopin).
- <sup>7</sup>La Partida (Alvarez).
- Little Birdies (Buzzi-Peccia).
- Lo, here the gentle lark (Bishop).
- Chi mi frena from "Lucia di Lammermoor" (Donizetti).

### CLASS 4.

- Clavelitos (Valverde).
- Les Filles de Cadix (Delibes).
- <sup>8</sup>Last Rose of Summer.
- Crépuscule (Massenet).
- Home Sweet Home (Bishop).
- Little Dorry (Seppili).

J.

<sup>1</sup>My record of this was scandalously short-lived. Be sure you get one fresh from the factory.

<sup>2</sup>I should put this higher.

<sup>3</sup>I loathe this song, but I suppose it ought to go into Class 1.

<sup>4</sup>I think she sings this badly. Class 4?

<sup>5</sup>I think this should be put into Class 2.

<sup>6</sup>I agree. It started higher.

<sup>7</sup>This has been put down after some argument. It is not a success.

<sup>8</sup>I should put this in Class 3.—C. M.

# THE POWER OF THE NEEDLE

By Fay Compton

**I** MUST confess to ignorance on one point. I do not know who invented the gramophone. Subject to that admission, I am inclined to think that no one did. I believe it was merely detected. However that may be, it is quite certain that to-day the gramophone plays not only tunes, but a very important part in modern life. Few people will deny that the dance craze, which now holds everyone literally in its grip, owes nearly everything to the gramophone. I do not say that dancing owes its origin to gramophones, but I do say that without the secret encouragement and private opportunity that a gramophone offers, dancing to-day would be almost wholly confined to the aged.

Let us take the case of the average youth before the era of the gramophone.

He possessed a cigarette case and an allowance nearly sufficient to keep it filled; he knew Savile Row and was desperately anxious that every one else should share that knowledge. After dinner, in the privacy and seclusion of a music hall, he was full of conversation, if not of garrulity and of "savoir faire," if not of "honi soit." But in public, alone in a drawing room, he was terribly shy and self-conscious. In the ballroom above all, he was restless and ill at ease and bashful, in fact almost everything about him, except his complexion, was retiring.

The gramophone has altered all this. It has taken impatient, yearning but diffident youth by the hand and has led him into paths of self confidence, experience and fulfilment.

How is this? Let me explain. To learn to dance before the days of the gramophone, it was necessary to attend a dancing class. Now it is true that children dance instinctively and beautifully, but that quality is very easily checked, so much so that at the age when youth is summoned by social conventions to dance, the young man knows nothing whatever about it, is obliged to learn and is terrified of taking the first step in public.

What does he do to-day? In the comfortable seclusion of his room he turns on the gramophone and with the aid of a brisk, busy and completely efficient young lady, who is so engrossed in directing his feet the way they should go as to be quite impersonal, he rapidly acquires the art of dancing without anyone knowing how or when, and ultimately, at the end of a few lessons, appears a slim, spruce adept fully capable of holding his (or somebody else's) own in the public ballroom.

This much at least has the gramophone accomplished for the young man of to-day.

The kruschen legs of the middle-aged have long since lost the precocious shyness of inexperience. The gramophone is not for them.

Besides bringing the acquisition of the art of dancing within reach of all, the gramophone has made it a domestic habit as well as a public exercise.

Organised dances in large hired ballrooms with expensive orchestras are no longer necessary, in fact they are almost obtrusive. All that is needful, if you are inclined to dance, is to kick back the rugs and put a record on the gramophone. This when you will and at your pleasure.

The gramophone then has secured instruction, independence and licence to the devotees of Terpsichore.

There is, however, another point about the gramophone if possible more important than its influence over dancing.

It has disarmed the critic of the past. Everybody is only too intimately acquainted with the type of person—usually of a former generation—who replies to your enthusiasm anent present performances with retorts of comparison in favour of dead protagonists.

How often has youth after an evening at the Opera, flushed with enjoyment and glowing with pleasure, described with rapture the singing of the tenor? Or raved with righteous enthusiasm over the wonderful playing of such and such a violinist? Only to cull the rejoinder, "Ah, you should have heard Henriques!"

Henriques is dead, and for better or for worse no record has been taken of his capability. Comparison, therefore, in his case cannot be odious. He is immune from criticism and his advocate immune from contradiction. But from to-day, henceforth, that will be impossible. To challenge comparison will merely necessitate extracting two records from their covers and then the discussion may be carried on, but it will be upon real and undeniable evidence.

The uses and resources of a gramophone are almost boundless. It supplies or defies conversation whichever is desired. It provides music for the dance, takes you to the opera or conducts you to the concert or, if you will, the music hall. It introduces you to new music and fresh personalities and repeats to your reminiscent ear something that you loved of old.

It is impossible now to imagine a world without gramophones. It is said that one day the world's supply of coal will be exhausted. No matter, there is always the tropics. But if the world's supply of needles were used up where should we seek for a substitute for the gramophone?



# GRAMOPHONE SOCIETIES' REPORTS

## BRIXTON GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

IT is, of course, a very proper modesty which prevents a man, after presenting a most admirable programme, from writing his own report, even if he happens to be "Recording Secretary," and for that reason I willingly stepped into the breach, on behalf of my friend Mr. Howarth.

Incidentally, I wished to say a word in reply to Mr. Robin Legge, of the *Telegraph*, who goes out of his way to administer a snub (in mentioning this paper) to Gramophone Societies at large, and our friend Mr. Rogers, of the Glasgow Society, in particular.

What, asks Mr. Legge, in effect, are the benefits to be derived from joining a Gramophone Society? I don't know, of course, if Mr. Legge is posing as a "highbrow," or if his faculty of imagination fails to keep pace with his musical knowledge, but for any man who is a believer in the social blessings of music (and if he isn't he ought to throw away his pen at once) to put such a question at all, shows that his thinking machinery is slightly out of gear, or that he is hopelessly behind the times.

If a well-conducted Gramophone Society, where one can hear, compare, and (on occasion) argue about all classes of music—and its reproduction—serves no useful function, then most assuredly neither does any journal devoted to the same ends, and the same argument, of course, applies to the lucubrations of Mr. Legge, who (presumably) wishes to leave the world, musically, better than he found it. One fact, however, in Mr. Rogers' article speaks for itself. This young society in Glasgow has already 250 members! The Society movement is growing, has come to stay, is doing good spade work for musical progress, and will, without doubt, be going strong long after the pens of its critics have ceased to splutter.

And now a few words about the "Brixton" programme of June 2nd, which I attach, should space be available to print it.

Mr. Howarth had conceived his programme on original lines—no less than a bird's-eye view, on records, of the development of music (chiefly instrumental) from the time of Bach to Mendelssohn.

This roughly covers, as may be perceived, the classical period, and, in fact, crosses the line into the romantic, seeing that it includes Schubert and Weber as well as Mendelssohn, although his two immortal contemporaries, Schumann and Chopin—who were the first to throw the golden gateways of musical poetry wide open—were not on the programme.

Opening with the two giants of the polyphonic period, Bach and Handel, the beginnings of Symphonic writing were illustrated; Bach being represented by a movement of the famous "Brandenburg" Suite, and also, as showing his complete mastery of technique, that wonderful fugue for one violin, from the Sonata in G minor, played by Isolde Menges.

It is impossible, of course, to touch on the whole of the full score of items by which we were led from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth by way of Handel's "Water Music"; Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony, and part of the lovely Quartet in D; Mozart's "Figaro" Overture, and a Motet sung by the Westminster Cathedral Choir, up to the arresting personality of Beethoven and the culmination of the classic Sonata and Symphony form.

From a movement of the great "C minor," and the Andante of the "Pastoral" we turned to the inspired "Unfinished" of Schubert, and Weber's "Freischütz," after which the orchestral examples closed with the delightful Scherzo of Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream," which, with its dainty, gossamer-like texture "brought the fairies into the orchestra." I should add that the programme was diversified with excellent vocal examples of the different composers.

After a hearty and well deserved ovation, Mr. Howarth intimated that, on a future occasion, he might complete the scheme by giving the development of the modern school—a very fitting sequence.

- 1.—(a) Portion of 1st Movement, "Brandenburg" Concerto, No. 3 (Bach: 1685–1750)—Royal Albert Hall Orchestra; (b) Fugue, from Violin Sonata in G minor (Bach)—Isolde Menges; (c) Prelude in G (Bach)—Irene Scharrer, piano-forte.
- 2.—(a) Allegro from "Water Music" (Handel: 1685–1759)—Halle Orchestra; (b) Suite No. 5, Air and Variations, for Harpsichord (Handel)—Mrs. Gordon Woodhouse; (c) Selected (Handel).
- 3.—(a) Andante from Symphony No. 6 (Haydn: 1732–1809)—Grand Opera Orchestra; (b) Air, "Non piu andrai" ("Creation") (Haydn)—Mme. Deering; (c) Adagio Cantabile from String Quartette in D, Op. 64, No. 5 (Haydn)—Flonzaley Quartette.
- 4.—(a) Overture, "Nozze di Figaro" (Mozart: 1756–1791)—London Symphony Orchestra; (b) Air, "Non piu andrai" ("Nozze di Figaro") (Mozart)—Eric Marshall; (c) Motet, "Ave verum corpus" (Mozart)—Westminster Cathedral Choir.
- 5.—(a) Portion of 1st Movement from Symphony No. 5, in C minor (Beethoven: 1770–1827)—Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; (b) Andante from Symphony No. 6, "Pastoral" (Beethoven)—Grand Opera Orchestra; (c) "Creation's Hymn" (Beethoven)—Clara Butt.
- 6.—(a) Second Movement from Symphony No. 8, in B minor (Schubert: 1797–1828)—Aeolian Orchestra; (b) Song, "Wohin?" Op. 25, No. 2 (Schubert)—Frieda Hempel; (c) Song, "Who is Sylvia?" (Schubert)—Hubert Eisdell.
- 7.—(a) Overture, "Der Freischütz" (Weber: 1786–1826)—Symphony Orchestra; (b) Recit. and Aria, "Ocean, thou mighty monster" ("Oberon") (Weber)—Elsa Stralia.
- 8.—(a) Scherzo from "Midsummer Night's Dream" (Mendelssohn: 1809–1847)—New Symphony Orchestra; (b) Song, "On wings of song" ("Auf flugeln des gesanges") (Mendelssohn)—Julia Culp; (c) Two Songs without words (Mendelssohn)—Leopold Godowsky, pianoforte.

W. B. P.

## THE SOUTH LONDON GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

ON May 26th the programmes were: Mr. EAST: "Magic Flute Overture" (Col.), Beecham Orchestra; "Ne pouvant reprimer les elans de la foi" (H.M.V.), Anseau; "Second Concerto in G minor," De Greef and Albert Hall Orchestra; "Oh, Che volo d'augello—Pagliacci" (H.M.V.), Bori; "Un bol di Vedremo" (H.M.V.), Galli-Curci; "Quartet in E minor" (Voc.), L.S.Q. Mr. BENDL: "Caliph of Bagdad" (Col.), London Symphony Orchestra; "Ombra mai fu" ("Handel's Largo"), Kirkby Lunn; "Handel's Largo" (H.M.V.), Caruso; "Humoreske—Dvorák" (Col.), Sorano; "Scherzo-Tarantelle, Op. 16" (H.M.V.), Heifetz; "Le Roi l'a dit" (Col.), London Symphony Orchestra; "Io son Titania" (H.M.V.), Tetrizzini; "Hungarian Rhapsody, No. 10" (H.M.V.), Paderevski; "O Dolce Contento" (Col.), Murchie and Draper. Mr. Ivory: "Coriolan" (H.M.V.), Albert Hall Orchestra; "Ay, ay, ay" (H.M.V.), Fleta; "Comme autrefois dans la nuit sombre" (H.M.V.), Galli-Curci; "Solo, profugo, reietto" (H.M.V.), Caruso and Journet; "Concerto No. 7 in G—1st Mvt." (H.M.V.), Maud Powell; "Morro ma prima in grazia" (H.M.V.), Destinn; "La Paloma" (H.M.V.), Gogorza; "Symphony No. 5 in C—4th Mvt." (H.M.V.), Albert Hall Orchestra; "O Sleep, Why dost thou leave me?" (H.M.V.), Gluck; "Canto del Presidiario" (H.M.V.), Gogorza.

Mr. W. E. H. East, who used an Exhibition No. 1 soundbox, scored a great success with "Ne pouvant"—No. 3 on his very pleasing programme.

Mr. J. F. Bendl reduced his audience to an unusual degree of silence when he played, as an "extra," the Empire Day record



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To quote the numerous adjectives of praise being lavished upon Columbia records to-day would savour of extravagance.

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L1473	(a) Moment Musicale, in F minor (Schubert); (b) Toccata, in A Major (Paradies)	-	-	-	Pianoforte Solos by William Murdoch.
L1474	Capriccio No. 2, in F sharp minor (Frank Bridge) The Midnight Review (Glinka) Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind (Shakespeare & Ketelbey)	-	-	-	Norman Allin, Bass.

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3244	Comin' thro' the Rye—with variations	-	-	-	Edward Coyle, Baritone.
	Serenade (Woodall)	-	-	-	
3244	Salt Water Ballads—No. 1.—Port of Many Ships (Masefield & Keel) No. 2.—Trade Winds	-	-	-	Harold Williams, Baritone.
3245	O, Falmouth is a Fine Town (Henley & Ronald)	-	-	-	The Century Quartette.
3246	Can't Remember (Brandon & Goatley)	-	-	-	
3246	O' Who will o'er the Downs so Free? (de Pearsall)	-	-	-	
3247	Comrades in Arms (Adam)	-	-	-	
3247	HARROW SCHOOL SONGS—No. 1.—Forty Years On	-	-	-	Chorus under the Direction of Dr. P. C. Buck, Harrow School.
	2.—Stet Fortuna Domus	-	-	-	
3248	3.—Queen Elizabeth Sat one Day	-	-	-	
	4.—When Raleigh Rose	-	-	-	
3260	First Suite in E flat (Gustav Holst)	-	-	-	The Regimental Band of H.M. Grenadier Guards
	Part 1.—Chaconne Part 2.—Intermezzo	-	-	-	(Conducted by Lieut George Miller).
3261	Part 3.—March	-	-	-	
	March Militaire (Schubert)	-	-	-	

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# Columbia



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## GRAMOPHONE SOCIETIES' REPORTS (continued from page 33)

made by Their Majesties at Buckingham Palace. The diction of both King and Queen is good, though this disc is heard to better advantage in a small room.

The No. 2 Exhibition soundbox was used by Mr. Bendl and also by our final demonstrator, Mr. Ivory, whose "star" disc seemed to be the Spanish serenade by Perez, "Ay, ay, ay."

We had the usual humour from "the bench," and quite a liberal amount of cross-talk regarding needles, fibre and other. A special "gala" evening is arranged for Saturday, June 16th, when each of the committee will provide two or three records. There will be free cake for the ladies and similarly-priced cigars for the gentlemen. The discs used in the programme will be distributed afterwards. At least, these are the attractions promised by our genial but untruthful chairman, Mr. Herbert. The programmes for our ordinary meeting on the last Saturday in June will be supplied by Messrs. Hardisty, Brockway & Parsons.

HERBERT R. PARSONS,  
Hon. Recording Secretary.

SHEFFIELD GRAMOPHONE AND  
PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

MR. J. H. HOLMES, who kindly provided the programme at our May meeting, held at headquarters on the 1st, had originally intended restricting his selection to items that had been sung or played at the series of international celebrity concerts held in Sheffield during the past season. This would naturally have added interest to the records, but the fact is our programmes have of late reached such a high standard of excellence that he found it impossible to carry out the idea without repeating items heard by our members at previous meetings. Mr. Holmes' choice had, therefore, to be modified somewhat, but nevertheless our enjoyment was not by any means lessened on that account, for the writer does not remember hearing a more representative and well-balanced programme. The martial strains of "1812 Overture," magnificently rendered by the band of the 1st Life Guards (Voc. K.05016), opened the performance, being followed by the "Londonderry Air" (London String Quartet—Col. L.1019), "Bright is the ring of words" (Peter Dawson), "Gavotte in E Major" (Kreisler—H.M.V. 07968), "Dov'è l'Indiana Bruna" (Galli-Curci—H.M.V. 2-053130), "Down in the Forest" (McCormack—H.M.V. 4-2367), etc., etc. No programme would be complete without a Caruso record, and this took the form of "Serenade Espagnole" (H.M.V. 7-320), a fine example of the great singer's art. In the writer's opinion a very effective record was "Wind in the Trees," by Amadio (flautist), (Voc. R.6024); it was very realistically done. Mr. Holmes concluded with a brisk and tuneful march, "Lynwood," by the Scots Guards Band, and a hearty vote of thanks was passed for the first-class entertainment provided for us. Mention must be made of the soundbox used—a "Voltona" fitted with the "Flex" diaphragm. This combination gave a particularly round, open tone. The honours in the monthly competition were carried by our secretary, Mr. H. Acton, the winning record being "Farewell Naples," by Caruso. The runner-up was Mr. Holmes' "Edward," by Norman Allin, a very dramatic rendering, in quite a class to itself.

THOS. H. BROOKS,  
Hon. Recording Secretary.

NORTH LONDON PHONOGRAPH AND  
GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

THE usual monthly meeting of this society was held at Manor Gardens Library on May 12th, when we deviated somewhat from our usual procedure by dividing the programme between two members: the first part by Mr. T. H. Mills, with the following well chosen records, special among them being the "Victor"; rarely have such fine records been heard in North London.

1. Band.—"Rondo Capriccioso" (Mendelssohn); VICTOR; Vessella's Italian Band.
2. Tenor.—"El Milagro de la Virgen" (Chapi); H.M.V.; Caruso.

3. Soprano.—"Caro Nome" ("Rigoletto") (Verdi); H.M.V.; Galli-Curci.
4. Flute.—"Little Nightingale" (Rossignolet); COL.; Murchie.
5. Baritone.—"Vien Leonora a piedi tuoi" ("La Favorita") (Donizetti); H.M.V.; Battistini.
6. Soprano.—"Addio del Passato" ("Traviata") (Verdi); H.M.V.; Lucrezia Bori.
7. Orchestra.—"Habanera" (Chabrier); COL.; London Symphony Orchestra.
8. Tenor.—(a) "Steal away" (Brown); (b) "Go down Moses" (Burleigh); Voc.; Roland Hayes.
9. Duet (Violin).—"Concerto for two Violins in D Minor, 2nd movement" (Bach); H.M.V.; Kreisler and Zimbalist.
10. Baritone.—"Prologue Pagliacci (Parts 1 and 2)" (Leoncavallo) H.M.V.; Zanelli.
11. Tenor.—"Il mio tesoro" ("Don Giovanni") (Mozart); VICTOR; McCormack.
12. Soprano.—"Non so più cosa son cosa faccio" ("Figaro") (Mozart); VICTOR; Galli-Curci.
13. Orchestra.—"Fête Bohème, Scenes Pittoresque" (Massenet); H.M.V.; New Symphony Orchestra.
14. Duet.—"Ai Nostri Monti" ("Trovatore") (Verdi); H.M.V.; Caruso and Homer.
15. Violin.—"Adagietto" (from "L'Arlésienne") (Bizet); VICTOR; Kreisler, with String Quartette.
16. Band.—"Grand March" ("Aida") (Verdi); VICTOR; Vessella's Italian Band.

After the usual interval, Mr. L. Wallace, one of the founders of the society, demonstrated the following items:

1. Band.—"The long day closes" (Sullivan); H.M.V.; Coldstream Guards.
2. Soprano.—"Connais-tu le pays" (Thomas); H.M.V.; Geraldine Farrar.
3. Tenor.—"When night descends" (Rachmaninoff); H.M.V.; John McCormack.
4. Violin.—"Celebre Gavotte" (Lulli); ZONO.; Marjorie Hayward.
5. Duet.—"Mira, o norma, ai tuoi ginocchi" (Bellini); H.M.V.; Gluck and Homer.
6. Orchestra.—"Stradella Overture" (Parts I and 2) (Flotow); REGAL; Classic Symphony Orchestra.
7. Bass.—"Don Juan's Serenade" (Tchaikowsky); H.M.V.; M. Murray-Davy.
8. Soprano.—"Tacea la notte placida" ("Trovatore") (Verdi); H.M.V.; L. Tetrizzini.
9. Piano.—"Pierrette" (Chaminade); H.M.V.; Una Bourne.
10. Baritone.—"O vecchio cor che batti" (Verdi); H.M.V.; P. Amato.
11. Duet.—"Della Vendetta" ("Rigoletto") Finale, Part 1 (Verdi); COL.; Formichi and Bettoni.
12. Duet.—"Chi e mai" ("Rigoletto") Finale, Part 2 (Verdi); COL.; Ferraris and Formichi.
13. Inst. Duet.—"Facilita" (Cornet and Concertina); WINNER; L. Shakespeare and E. Rutherford.
14. Tenor.—"The last watch" (Pinsuti); BEKA M.; John Parry.
15. Baritone.—"Eri tu che macchiavi" (Verdi); COL.; Stracciari.

Future Meeting.—July 14th: Demonstration by Mr. Gammon. Both gentlemen were accorded the usual vote of thanks, proposed by our chairman, Mr. L. Ivory.

E. H. THOMAS (Hon. Secretary).

## LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

THE extent to which the gramophone record has contributed to a knowledge and appreciation of Grand Opera can hardly be overestimated.

It is therefore natural and proper that gramophonists should take a deep and practical interest in the endeavour to establish a school of National Opera which shall provide us with works by British composers, fittingly rendered in our mother-tongue by native-born artists.

The notions regarding the deficiency of British Opera hitherto commonly held—not only by the *dilettanti*, but by the greater



proportion of recognised authorities—are steadily losing force. There would appear to be no valid reason why, as a nation, we should not be as distinguished in the sphere of opera as we are admittedly pre-eminent in other forms of musical art. Our symphony orchestras, for instance, are generally acknowledged to be unexcelled. Famous composers and conductors have in recent times paid glowing tributes to the brilliance of British instrumentalists. M. Ansermet and Mr. Albert Coates, both of whom have a wide Continental experience and popularity, have expressed the opinion that our orchestras are in all respects equal, and in some respects superior, to the world's most celebrated bands.

In the Savoy operas we have a form of musical art, unique and inimitable, demanding peculiar and rare interpretative gifts for its adequate presentation. Yet none but British artists have ever effectively captured the elusive refinements which have served to procure for the Savoy operas their astounding and unimpaired success.

In operas of the Italian and Wagnerian types our singers cannot reasonably be expected to shine as do singers who, on account of racial, temperamental and educational influences, are particularly fitted for the work. The singing of the one demands a richness and flexibility of voice which, for climatic reasons alone, we cannot hope to produce, and the German opera is, after all, in its story, sentiment and unwieldiness somewhat foreign to our nature. Though not so frequently exploited, Russian opera is perhaps, except for its inherent gloom, a better vehicle for the display of native talent.

But the time is surely ripe for the birth of a school of National Opera, generously financed, intelligently controlled and comprehensive in its scope. A school that may depend upon continuity of its endeavours and hope in time to develop its own characteristics and traditions.

These somewhat desultory remarks are the outcome of reflections bearing on the Liverpool Society's second April meeting, which was devoted exclusively to a programme of grand opera records in English. Space will not permit one to deal particularly with the selections offered—they were all familiar and rendered by well-known singers—but it may be said that it was the achievements and promise, rather than the limitations, that were the main features revealed by the records.

Mr. E. Holmes, who was responsible for the evening's entertainment, and whose arrangements were excellent, may feel well content in the knowledge that his meeting served a good and useful purpose and prompted some earnest and thought-provoking discussion.

J. W. HARWOOD,  
*Recording Secretary.*

## BRADFORD AND DISTRICT GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

**F**OLLOWING upon the success of the public demonstration of the Edison Recreations, the members' night, held at headquarters on Wednesday, April 25th, resulted in a full complement of members being present. The programme was provided by the members and took the form of a "Favourite Record" Competition, which was won by Mr. Myers who entered the following record:—"Qui la voce sua soave"—"I Puritani" (Bellini), sung by Amelita Galli-Curci.

The public demonstration of the "World Records" and Controller given on Wednesday, May 9th, created a very favourable impression, despite the limitations of the present World Catalogue, but the size of the audience did not compare favourably with those of the previous open nights. "The Unfinished Symphony" (Schubert), by the Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, was one of the outstanding records, being complete and well recorded.

On Wednesday, May 23rd, in the Lecture Hall, at headquarters, the advantages gained by the use of fibre needles was demonstrated to members in conjunction with a programme of H.M.V. Celebrity Records. Mr. Smith attended to answer any queries regarding the "World Records" and Controller.

Our usual monthly meeting is to be taken up by the business of the Annual General Meeting, when the retiring Committee will submit their report and the election of the Officers and Committee for the new session commencing September next will be considered. All members are requested to make a note of this and attend.

ALBERT KENYON,  
*Press Secretary.*

## CITY OF LEEDS GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

**J**UDGING by the enthusiasm which greeted the items submitted by our Secretary, Mr. Hainsworth, at the May meeting, one might state that the programme, composed of 26 items from the recent Columbia issues, was in the nature of a very pleasant surprise to many present. Undoubtedly, the present issues of the Columbia Co. are remarkable for their fidelity to tone and their delightfully smooth-running surface. Alas! it has not been always so, but now we are like Oliver—we want more.

A. Dawson Berry, Esq., in the Chair. Machine in use: Society's. Principal items: "Mattinata," Stracciari; "Creation's Hymn," Clara Butt; "Midnight Review," Norman Allin; "Here in the Quiet Hills," Hubert Eisdell; "Merrie England," Columbia Opera Co.; "Eroica Symphony," Queen's Hall Orchestra; "Bretislav (Op. 10)," Bratza; "Hungarian Rhapsody," Busoni; "Andante Cantabile," Lener Quartet; "Gavotte in D," Pablo Casals. A hearty vote of thanks, proposed from the chair and very ably seconded by the Vice-President, Mr. Willy, to Mr. Hainsworth for his extremely entertaining evening.

B. MCNATTY PALMER,  
*Hon. Recording Secretary.*

## EDINBURGH GRAMOPHONE AND PHONOGRAPH SOCIETY

**A**T the first of our May Meetings, Mr. Cameron gave us a demonstration of the Duophone. The neatness of the machine and its fittings was commented on, especial notice being taken of the device for stopping the machine and lifting the needle off the record without lifting the cover. On the musical side the instrument showed up well, orchestral music being particularly effective. The records chosen by Mr. Cameron included "Mignon" Selection, Edward, "Moment Musical" and "Toccata" (Murdoch) "Solveig's Song" (Labette), all Columbia; Kreisler, Heifetz, on H.M.V., a Liszt "Hungarian Rhapsody" on Fonotipia and several "Musica" records. The last-named record is of German manufacture and has the famous trade mark—without Nipper.

The second meeting, and our last Gramophone evening for the season was devoted to a Members' Night. Edna Thornton, Norman Allin, Kreisler, George Buck, George Baker, Joseph Hislop, Caruso, Robert Radford, the R.A.H. Orchestra, and the Royal Artillery Band, all contributed to the programme, while the makes of records were H.M.V., Columbia, Vocalion, Fonotipia, Marathon, Pathé. The second half of the meeting was given over to an "unbusinesslike business meeting." I say unbusinesslike because it was not called in accordance with rules; no violence was used.

H. L. M. MORTON, *Hon. Sec.*

## GLASGOW AND DISTRICT GRAMOPHONE SOCIETY

**M**ESSRS. PATERSONS, SONS & CO., LTD., Buchanan Street, demonstrated before the Society on April 10th. A programme, selected from the latest lists of H.M.V., Columbia and Vocalion Records was submitted. Two instruments were also lent: a cabinet "Duophone" and a No. 11 H.M.V. The first-named provoked considerable interest on account of the curious double soundbox which it possesses. Mr. Kelly, who kindly demonstrated for us, tested both instruments with a new record of Carmen Hill's "Spring is in my Garden," and after playing it on the H.M.V. model remarked that "it spoke for itself" (which was the best reproduction). Among the records submitted, those deserving of particular mention were mostly to be found in the first half of the programme, although there were also some gems in the latter portion of the evening's proceedings. Milton Hayes provoked great mirth by his "Meanderings of Monty"—a record which all searchers after true humour and good voice reproduction on the gramophone ought to hear.

W. J. ROGERS, *Hon. Secretary.*

# THE HARPSICHORD AND GRAMOPHONE

IT would be a wonderful thing if Harpsichord Records should induce music lovers to study this beautiful and interesting instrument. The first records made were largely in the nature of an experiment, for the Harpsichord not being so loud as a piano it was feared they might not be sufficiently distinct. However, it proved that the essential differences between the two instruments were all in the Harpsichord's favour, for, as has been well remarked, "its salient qualities as a musical instrument are first of all its accent and attack, a clearly defined ringing tone, each note standing out in outline, as it were, from another in all its registers." The most important of the keyed instruments in use during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries its ancestry dates back to the early years of the fifteenth century, for the principle of its mechanism is identical with that of the Virginals.

This is entirely different from that of the piano in which the strings are *struck* by a hammer, whereas in the Virginals, Spinet and Harpsichord a wooden upright, called a jack, is raised when a key is struck, causing a *plectrum* to *pluck* the strings. Various materials were used for these *plectra*, the principal being quills and leather; the former give more brilliancy, while leather produces a sweeter tone and has the added advantage of being more durable. Up to the end of the seventeenth century the term Virginals included the small rectangular Virginals, the triangular Spinet, and the Harpsichord. In the privy purse expenses of Henry VIII. mention is made of "a payer of Virginals in ome coffor with four stoppes," and again the "Payer of new long Virginals made harp fashion" were doubtless what were later on termed Harpsichords. The long harp shape allowed a greater length of string with a consequent richness of tone, while the width between the strings gave room for a second set with an additional row of jacks, the guides which

kept these in position being movable. A small displacement, commanded by a stop, caused the plectra either to catch or to miss the string. Two strings in unison were thus available for each note, either severally or together, thus making three varieties of strength and tone colour available. Further addition of a set of strings tuned an octave higher than the rest and another set tuned an octave lower, together with a second keyboard, gives an almost infinite variety of combinations and contrasts of tone; the player has a miniature orchestra at his command.



Violet Gordon Woodhouse

Anyone who may decide to study the Harpsichord will find an endless store of beautiful music which can, indeed, only be properly understood and appreciated when played on the instrument for which it was written. If for no other reason their technical difficulties ought to convince the student that the brilliant and intricate Elizabethan music preserved for us in the FitzWilliam Virginal Book was written for an instrument worthy of it. Selections from William Byrd's works in this unique collection

have been made by A. Fuller Maitland and W. Barclay Squire (Stainer & Bell), who have also edited "Twenty-five Pieces for Keyed Instruments," from *Benjamin Cosyn's Virginal Book*, published by J. & W. Chester, Ltd., whose firm have also published a complete edition of Purcell's works, edited by Barclay Squire, at a moderate price, and in addition a series of selections from *The Contemporaries of Purcell*, edited by Fuller Maitland. Then later we have Couperin, Scarlatti, Handel, and before all and above all, Bach, whose Harpsichord works rank among the finest of his compositions. I hope some day to see an English translation of *Le Clavecin dans l'œuvre de J. S. Bach*, by that talented Swiss musician, the late Edmond Roethlisberger. It should be in the hands of every Bach student. "Would you," he writes, "know Bach at his most



intimate, his most original, it is in his Harpsichord compositions that he is to be found. . . . He wrote for it from his earliest youth until his death and confided to it many of those almost supernatural inspirations which hypnotize us as if messages from a Beyond to which he alone could penetrate." Again he points out Bach's extraordinary gift for treating every instrument according to its individual character. When he wrote for the Harpsichord his polyphonic genius made use to the utmost of its almost infinite capacity for contrast and colour. In view of this what are we to think of the critic of a recent piano recital gravely reproving the player for attempting to put colour into her playing which would have been impossible for the tinkly instruments for which Bach wrote!

Mozart, essentially an orchestral writer, wrote

for the Harpsichord almost as for an orchestra, and his Sonatas, Fantasies, etc., need all the colour and tone which are impossible to obtain on the piano.

It must also be remembered that in Bach's and Mozart's time the Harpsichord always figured in the orchestra. Conductors used it much more than the baton. Its quality of tone enabled it to accompany without smothering the principal instruments and blend with the strings as no piano can.

Can too much be said for an instrument for which so much glorious music has been written?

Harpsichord and Gramophone—the words sound strange together—but how large our debt to the latter if it can give to us and preserve for the future some idea of the works of the great Masters as they wrote and intended them.

VIOLET GORDON WOODHOUSE.

## AGAINST THE GRAMOPHONE

USUALLY, I find, I conquer my prejudices. The prejudice I had against the gramophone when I first heard of it, a prejudice which was increased when I first heard it, has not been conquered by the passage of time. It grows. I believe that the gramophone is one of those scientific inventions which have been placed upon the market years before their time. It was an invention: someone had financed it, and that someone, I presume, unwilling to wait ten, twenty, or thirty years more, for the necessary improvements, and until he had something to put before the world which would be really worth hearing, felt that he must at once turn it into cash. It was born prematurely.

The gramophone is a destroyer of peace; it rends the family asunder. The hours which were peaceful it has made cacophonous. Before the gramophone arrived it was difficult to keep the average middle-class home tidy and symmetrical; now it is impossible. The beastly thing in its various shapes and sizes and materials conforms to no one scheme of decoration. It clashes with any other furniture that the room may hold. Again, no one has invented any economical and effective method of keeping records: they bulge from unshapely "albums" or lie about, sometimes in paper envelopes, sometimes cheek by jowl, scratching one another, sometimes in the sun, becoming bent. The majority of records perpetuate the grossest musical vulgarities, and since nobody can continue to love a gross musical vulgarity for more than ten days the pile accumulates and, since I am the only person who has dared to dash down a record and destroy it, provides in

most houses shelter for spiders, earwigs and mice. And, after all, what does even the best record provide? Not what it promises to provide, I swear. I paid for the gramophone that cumbers my own modest home quite a considerable sum. But when someone places on it a seven-and-sixpenny record—Fancy! For seven-and-six you can buy Norman Douglas's "South Wind," which is not a record and which will give pleasure as long as the paper on which it is printed will hold together!—I get as a result not happy, pleasant, melodious, moving music, but something which scratches, something which is shrill. When the record includes the human voice—well, frankly, is it not a miserable business?

It is true that I am not musical. Much of what I write may in consequence be discounted by the gramophone's adherents. Still, to hear a piano played gives me, generally, pleasure. It is played at seemly hours; its playing is an example of human effort, of human skill. But one cannot be sure when a gramophone will scatter its discordant notes; and any fool or *fainéant* can "turn it on." Before breakfast, perhaps. . . . In a gramophone-ridden house one never can be sure that the sacred silence will not be shattered.

Again, a gramophone is a very expensive instrument. You pay your £10 or £50 for it, and then it is no use until you have bought records. And having bought one record you have to buy a dozen; and having bought a dozen, you have to buy a dozen dozen. It is a permanent charge on your income, a sap, a cancer, an infernal nuisance.

GRANT RICHARDS.

## TIMES AND SEASONS

SINCE it may be assumed in these days that nearly everybody has a gramophone, there is some point in speculating a little upon the morals and decencies, the times and seasons, for gramophonizing. The instrument, of course, will lend itself to almost any vagary. One man might keep it in his bedroom and turn it on as he leapt from his couch to drown the singing of the matutinal lark, and another might prefer to keep it in the bathroom to discourage his own tendency to sing while sponging. But to illustrate as strongly as possible that moralities and decencies *are* involved I have only to propound the question—should one play the gramophone immediately after breakfast?

Here, I think, we touch one of the ingrained superstitions of the Englishman, that music, except for the purpose of scales and exercises, is not decent at such an early hour of the day. Yet the idea has probably grown, not from the indecency, but from the impossibility, of such diversions for the worker. With outward horror, but with secret envy, let us imagine a man so unfortunate as to be wealthy, unambitious, unencumbered, comfortable and provided with a gramophone. He comes down to breakfast at half-past nine: he skims the headlines of his paper over the kidneys and reads the feuilleton over his marmalade. Then, if I am right, he lights a large but mild cigar, sinks into an armchair, and rings for the butler to set the gramophone going. "My dear fellow . . ." you say in expostulation, "how absurd . . . how could anybody . . . I mean . . . can't you see?" I apologise. Imagination, yours at any rate, boggles at the thought: yet what I see in all alluring clearness, is a gentleman tastefully attired, smoking in an easy but not too soft a chair, while at ten o'clock on a sunny morning, he listens to the voice of Caruso issuing from a little cupboard in a mahogany cabinet. The villain! The *embusqué*! The renegade! But there he is, and I cannot for the life of me see what is to prevent a sufficiently lazy and independently minded man from being in this enviable position. There is a passage in one of Baron Corvo's books which describes how he hired a band of Italian musicians to play him an *aubade* while he ate a breakfast of fruit in his Italian villa. You say "how charming!" when you read it, not observing the Baron's bad taste in choosing an air of Tschaiowsky's for such a place and occasion: yet you would condemn an English gentleman, who cannot so easily hire serenaders, from giving himself a similar pleasure after his eggs and bacon. "Pho!" you will exclaim. "Wotherspoon. The sort of feller who plays the gramophone after breakfast!" Your audience will understand what you mean, and

Wotherspoon's reputation will be gone for ever. But I praise Wotherspoon, if such a man exist, and pray that he may continue to play the gramophone after breakfast to show how little, in a philosopher's estimation, public opinion is to be valued.

Again, to show how ridiculous our inhibitions are, let me ask what you would say, if, on visiting a lady or gentleman, you found her or him solitary, listening to the music of his own gramophone. You would think it odd, would you not? You would endeavour to dissemble your surprise; you would look twice to see whether some other person were not hidden in some corner of the room, and if you found no such one would painfully blush, as if you had discovered your friend sniffing cocaine, emptying a bottle of whisky, or plaiting straws in his hair. People, we think, should not do things "to themselves," however much they may enjoy doing them in company: they may not even talk to themselves without incurring grave suspicion. And I fear that if I were discovered listening to the Fifth Symphony without a chaperon to guarantee my sanity, my friends would fall away with grievous shaking of the head. But, when science and enterprise have put so much pleasure within our reach as a gramophone and a selection of good records will give, you will find it hard to convince me by logic, or mere vociferation, that music in solitude is indecent. If I may read alone, I may turn on the gramophone alone: for a record is but another book, and why must I have company to enjoy it? Two persons, I admit, is the ideal number: but my reason for this opinion is no higher one than a distaste for winding up and changing the needles myself.

And so, in the matter of gramophones, let us try to free ourselves from these trammels of convention, which would confine the use of the gramophone to the first half hour of after dinner plethora. There is music to be had for all times and seasons. I would turn on something hopeful after breakfast like the minuet from Mozart's Symphony in E flat, or a madrigal by the English Singers; after tea I would be ruminative and romantic with a chamber concert of strings or Gervase Elwes singing the *Shropshire Lad* with his rich English quality. Caruso, Galli-Curci and the rest will be for the last hours of the day when the mind is lazily receptive. And then, sometimes for a week or more, the machine shall be silent, so that I may come fresh to my records and find new pleasures in them. Yes, one may as well be intelligent. Your gramophone is not a toy, and will use you as you use it. The perfect gramophonist has imagination. He knows no stereotyped times and seasons, but when the spirit says "Now," he seizes the minute and knows



what record will be the magic interpreter of his mood, whether it be spring-like among daffodils, while the kettle's boiling, or autumnal and brooding under a harvest moon ; whereas some will put on the

Scherzo of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* after a beefsteak pudding. Times and seasons matter, indeed, but in a deeper sense.

ORLO WILLIAMS.

## FIDDLERS OR VIOLINISTS?

WHY is it that the great violinists of the day do not think it worth their while to bequeath to posterity something better than fiddling? Look at the list of Mischa Elman records ; at the Kreisler records ; at the Heifetz records ; at the Ysaye records ; at the Bratza records. Among the whole lot you will scarcely find one moderately good piece of music : nothing but endless caprices and capriccios and gypsy airs, and silly little waltzes and dreary berceuses. To what real use has Kreisler put that perfect beauty of tone which he alone possesses? To what use has Heifetz put his strength? And into what miserable vessels has Mischa Elman poured out his emotion? How one begins to wish that Paganini had never been born! And now Mr. Albert Sammons is trying to compete with the other fiddlers. What is the good of Mr. Sammons playing that waltz No. 15 of Brahms (Voc. R.6102) when Kreisler has already (H.M.V. 5-7961) played it? There is an exquisite record of Mr. Albert Sammons and Mr. William Murdoch playing Beethoven's F major sonata (Col. L.1231, L.1232). Why has Mr. Sammons become too grand for Beethoven nowadays? Even Kreisler might find it not beneath his dignity to play for us at any rate one Beethoven sonata. To be sure, Mischa Elman has managed a country dance arranged by himself (H.M.V. 5-7940) and a minuet (H.M.V. 3-7921), and Heifetz has given us two dullish excerpts from *The Ruins of Athens* (H.M.V. 4-7939 and 4-7941); but neither has condescended to a sonata, or aspired to a concerto. It may be, of course, that they are not allowed the necessary orchestra ; but if I were a great violinist I should want to go down to posterity with something more to my name than *moti perpetui*, meditations, and minuets.

The only violin concerto we have is Sir Edward Elgar's, and that we have twice by Mr. Albert Sammons (Col. L.1071 and L.1072) and Miss Marie Hall (H.M.V. D.79 and D.80). Our violin fare is scraps, and even if Kreisler does arrange some pretty little piece, all his fellows must try to show that they can hash it up more tastily than he can.

Miss Isolde Menges is not above giving us some simple but good violin playing. The Handel sonata issued last month (H.M.V. E.280) is magnificent ; so is the Fugue from Bach's "Sonata No. 1 in G minor" (H.M.V. E.269). Miss Marjorie Hayward has provided us with plenty of rubbish ; but she

has atoned by her work in the Melody lectures of Sir H. Walford Davies (H.M.V. C.1063, C.1064, C.1065, C.1066, C.1067 and C.1068). Miss Daisy Kennedy has offered us a desirable little programme.

No doubt we shall be told that the public prefers gymnastics to music ; but personally I do not believe that. The fact of the matter is that the vanity of the fiddlers themselves is responsible for this state of affairs, and it has nothing whatever to do with the public. The gramophone programmes of the great violinists of to-day put one in mind of nothing so much as a lot of little boys playing follow-my-leader along park railings.

A word should be said here in favour of Mme. Chemet who, apart from that eternal Meditation from Thaïs (H.M.V. 3-97039) and Pierné's Serenade (H.M.V. 5-7930), has an interesting list in the catalogue of His Master's Voice. She is a brilliant violinist ; and although Heifetz collared the most attractive movement from Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole* (H.M.V. 3-07929) and what is more collared an orchestra into the bargain (not that I am blaming Heifetz for this ; one is only too glad that he should have discovered that there is such a composer as Lalo), she plays three of the movements with a piano accompaniment quite superbly (H.M.V. 3-07936, 3-07937, 3-07938). Perhaps Mme. Chemet, next time she comes to England, will persuade His Master's Voice to let her have an orchestra and give us one of the great violin concertos complete. Enough of this fiddling! Give us the violin, and some of the great music that has been written for it.

No, I have not forgotten Bach's Concerto for two violins (H.M.V. 2-07920, 2-07918, 2-07922), and I should like to see a green spot on the crimson pages of the Kreisler and Zimbalist records where these numbers appear. But just as the Sahara is inadequately provided with oases, so is that fiery furnace of fame at the end of the H.M.V. catalogue insufficiently cooled. Sometimes when I study its pages I suffer from a similar oppression to that which afflicts me on seeing a greenhouse crammed with magnificent calceolarias. Even the delicious harpsichord discs of Mrs. Woodhouse might acquire from these crimson pages the meretricious bloom of waxen fruit, and perhaps if Kreisler, Heifetz, and Mischa Elman could be printed in black and white they would feel more like musicians and less like acrobats.

Z.

## NEW DANCE RECORDS

**I**T was, I believe, a late Shah of Persia, who, when taken to the opera in order that he might be impressed by Western music, expressed preference for the "tuning up" of the orchestra, and desired that it might be repeated.

He would have revelled in the rendering of a simple dance melody as "enshrined" (to quote the advertisements) in a modern dance record. These records are, indeed, a source of wonder and considerable joy—the best of them, that is.

Ingenuity is taxed to the utmost to provide effects—hoots, whistles, wails or quaint rhythms—which are so well marshalled that the result is often quite masterly in its precision and completeness. Trombones laugh, saxophones sob, and imaginary kittens flit along the keys of the piano; but through it all, however eccentric the ensemble may be, the tune of the dance stands out so alluringly that the first couple of bars or so set the feet atwiltch to begin.

There is a mistaken idea about that the dance orchestras, whose playing the gramophone has made most familiar, are composed of performers who play "by ear"—the kind of persons of whom proud fathers remark: "Never had a lesson in his life."

Now, the outstanding merits of modern dance records are the superb technique of the players, enabling them to execute their remarkable effects, and the sound knowledge of musical theory, and the capabilities of their instruments which make those effects possible.

It is a fact, and a very interesting one, that many of those players are ex-members of symphony orchestras—in more than one case leaders—and can play Scriabine or Schönberg with comparative ease.

Most of them come from the New World, and the records we have of their playing is typical of the rather restless spirit of that country which is never satisfied with what it has accomplished, but ceaselessly strives for something new.

The composers and arrangers of these dance numbers do not hesitate to embody *motifs* from standard musical works. Indeed, some of the older compositions are "lifted" bodily to form the basis of an attractive fox-trot or waltz.

In "Peter Gink" one finds that some of Greig's "Peer Gynt" music has been so impressed, and it would be interesting to know whether the resultant paraphrase, especially that of the name, caused the late composer to turn in his grave, or merely to give a ghostly chuckle. Again, Paul Whiteman's arrangement of the popular "Parade of the Wooden Soldiers" opens with a fanfare from Delibes "Sylvia" Ballet, and, of course, Chopin and Schubert are being "quoted" to an increasing extent.

The purist would frown on such antics, which at times certainly approach the mark known colloquially as "the limit." But they probably do no harm, and may even revive interest in compositions which would otherwise fade out.

True, these musical effusions are ephemeral—that is their whole essence; they are the very "mayflies"

of music. Their appeal is largely humorous and, like the best of jokes, loses interest with repetition. Hence there is an enormous output of new dance records, and anything like a detailed review of them would need a special issue of this paper to contain it.

To the gramophone dance record we owe one social improvement. The "wallflower" in the dance room is disappearing. Young folk have the opportunity to practice at home to music supplied, via the gramophone, by first-class bands. Up to date and up to tempo, these records have killed the shyness that used to overtake the infrequent dancer on entering a ballroom. This country is following the Continental lead, where everybody dances.

To those who would quarrel with modern dance music, let them get an old issue of a "Dance Annual" and play over some of the interminable waltzes of the days when the barn dance was the last thing in snap and vim. Then let them play over Paul Whiteman's record of "Wana." I do not think that they will need further argument.

The following selections from the latest lists show the large numbers of records issued, for which there is a ready demand. Each one of the numbers has some touch of individual treatment, and the fact that certain of the most popular items are recorded by each company does not mean that they are alike, except for the air which forms the basis. All are 10in. double-sided:

**"HIS MASTER'S VOICE."**—B.1637.—**Homesick**, Fox-Trot; **Fate**, Fox-Trot. B.1639.—**Wonderful One**, Waltz; **Underneath the Mellow Moon**, Waltz. B.1641.—**I found a four-leaf clover**, Fox-Trot; **Just like a doll**, Fox-Trot. B.1642.—**Until my luck comes rolling along**, Fox-Trot; **Journey's end**, Fox-Trot (Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra). B.1638.—**Aunt Hagar's Blues**, Fox-Trot; **Aggravatin' Papa**, Fox-Trot (The Virginians). B.1643.—**Eleanor**, Fox-Trot; **Lovin' Sam**, The Sheik of Alabam, Fox-Trot (Jack Hylton and his Orchestra). B.1595.—**Wine, Women and Song**, Waltz (De Groot and the Piccadilly Orchestra); **Lolla**, Fox-Trot (The Piccadilly Hotel Dance Band). B.1640.—**Pianoflage**; **Knice and Knifty** (Roy Bargy, pianoforte).

**COLUMBIA**.—3227.—**A Silver Canoe**, Fox-Trot; **Chicago**, Fox-Trot. 3220.—**Dancing Honeymoon**, Fox-Trot, "Battling Butler"; **Longing for you**, Fox-Trot. 3212.—**Mimosa San**, Fox-Trot; **Are you playing fair?** Fox-Trot. 3185.—**Kitten on the Keys**, Fox-Trot; **Forget-me-not**, Fox-Trot. 3203.—**Three o'clock in the Morning**, Valse; **Swanee Smiles**, Fox-Trot. 3204.—**Yankee doodle blues**, Fox-Trot; **Night**, Fox-Trot. 3196.—**Tampa Bay**, Fox-Trot; **Ta bouche: Ca c'est une chose**, Fox-Trot (all played by the Savoy Havana Band).

**VOCALION**.—M.1129.—**Who Cares**, Fox-Trot (Selvin's Boardwalk Orchestra); **Fate**, Fox-Trot (The Bar Harbor Society Orchestra). M.1130.—**Isle of Sweethearts**, Waltz with Hawaiian Guitar Chorus (Selvin's Dance Orchestra); **The Lonely Nest**, Fox-Trot (The Bar Harbor Society Orchestra). M.1131.—**Sheba**, Fox-Trot with Vocal Refrain (The Savoy Harmonists); **Oh! Star of Eve**, If Winter Comes, One-Step, introducing "Wana" (The Savoy Harmonists). M.1132.—**Chicago**, That Toddling Town, Fox-Trot (The Savoy Harmonists); **Little Rover**, Don't forget to come back home, Fox-Trot with Vocal Refrain (The Savoy Harmonists). M.1133.—**Dancing Honeymoon**, Fox-Trot, "Battling Butler" (The Savoy Harmonists); **Song of India**, Fox-Trot (Wiedoeft's Californians).



# REVIEW OF RECORDS

**VOCALION.**—A.0191.—**Evelyn Scotney** (Soprano). **Caro Nome** from "**Rigoletto**" (Verdi).

Miss Evelyn Scotney, who is an Australian, is almost a new singer to the British public. I can find only one other record of hers in the English catalogues—"Ah! fors'è lui." The American Vocalion catalogue contains several, of which the present one appears to be the latest. Her voice and her use of it, in this record much more than in "Ah! fors'è lui," which was published more than a year ago, make one think of Mme. Galli-Curci. As Miss Scotney has spent some time in New York, I think we shall not be far wrong in supposing her to have been happily influenced by that great artist. If in consequence of being able, from her economic position, to attract the greatest singers of the day, America were able also to create a school of singing, to become the home of a fine tradition, she would make a serious contribution to culture.

I have never heard that beautiful song "Caro Nome" more exquisitely sung, nor exquisite singing more perfectly reproduced. It is one of the best soprano records in existence.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—08127.—**Flonzaley Quartet** (instrumental), **Quartet in D major, op. 18, No. 3—Presto** (Beethoven).

There is no need to say that this *presto* from an early work of Beethoven is superbly played. The Flonzaley Quartet is probably the finest in the world; its members have, it is said, made vows, or even a contract, never to play except together, and their self-denial has been rewarded by the most perfect *ensemble* to be found anywhere. Some of their earlier records are marred by unpleasant surface noises. These surface noises are particularly irritating in chamber music records, and although the present record is much better than most of the older ones, indeed it is pretty good, still it cannot be pronounced perfect. The recent Lener Quartet records have accustomed us to a very high standard in this matter of "scratch," and however grateful we may be for any record of the Flonzaley Quartet, we are disposed to look the gift horse rather severely in the mouth. I wish the recording companies would plan some sort of campaign for getting all the most important classical pieces of chamber music recorded complete. One of the most satisfactory things about a gramophone is its capacity to reproduce adequately the combination of a few instruments. We ought to have, for example, all the later chamber music of Beethoven. This is of the greatest importance and interest to the student and, except for those who can read a score, quite unavailable except after a lifetime of concert-going.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—D.690.—**Royal Albert Hall Orchestra, conducted by Sir Landon Ronald. Coriolan Overture** (Beethoven).

An encouraging sign that the recording companies are taking music more seriously is the evidently increasing tendency to avoid cuts. Recently, for example, we have had a new recording of the whole of the Fifth Symphony, and the Velvet Face have given us the "Unfinished" complete. This record of the "Coriolan" overture is an excellent one and quite complete, of one of the most important and characteristic works of Beethoven's maturity.

**COLUMBIA.**—3260, 3261.—**Band of H.M. Grenadier Guards, conducted by Lieut. Geo. Miller. First suite in E flat** (Gustav Holst); **Marche Militaire** (Schubert).

Gustav Holst has, as much as any man alive, a sense for instruments, and no one interested in orchestral colour, and still less anyone interested in records of military bands, should miss this piece of music, specially written by such a master of his craft for a military band.

A word may be said here about the "rattle" on certain new records. I have often noticed that a new record is apt to give out the most disturbing and unpleasant surface noises. This record was a particularly bad sinner. It is nothing at all serious, being caused by dust which for some reason or other it is impossible to brush out before the record has been played. After playing two or three times and dusting between each playing it will be found completely

to disappear. No record should be judged until it has been played several times. This one turns out to be entirely free from any extraneous surface noises and is a very good piece of recording.

**ACTUELLE.**—10389.—**Tito Schipa** (Tenor). **Prendi l'anel ti dono** from "**La Sonnambula**" (Bellini). **Dal labbro il canto estasiato** from "**Falstaff**" (Verdi).

Tito Schipa is a tenor of whose voice very few records exist. This is, I believe, the first that the Pathé Company have produced, and I hope that the sale will encourage them to produce others. He is an exceptionally gifted and intelligent singer. Neither of the songs has been hitherto easily obtainable for the gramophone. I am particularly impressed by the beautiful aria from "La Sonnambula," which has the lyrical charm of so many of the arias from that delightful opera.

**VOCALION.**—C.01092.—**Elena Gerhardt, Der Nussbaum** (Schumann).

**VOCALION.**—C.01093.—**Elena Gerhardt, Ständchen, Op. 17, No. 2** (Strauss).

Mme. Elena Gerhardt is the most distinguished living singer of the German *lied*. Records of her singing were available before the war, but, owing I believe to legal difficulties, they have never been put on the market again. Recently Mme. Gerhardt gave a series of concerts in this country, and the Vocalion Company were wise in seizing the opportunity to have some new records made. These two are extremely beautiful, especially the "Nussbaum," which she sings with feeling and perfect taste. Such records are particularly important to us, since the German *lied* is the kind of song that has been most neglected in England by the gramophone companies. I see that Brahms' "Feldeinsamkeit" is being issued, but at the time of going to press I had not received it.

**VOCALION.**—C.01090.—**Celys Beralta** (Soprano). **Io son Titania** (Polonaise), from "**Mignon**" (Thomas).

Mme. Beralta possesses what is known as "une voix blanche." It is the kind of voice which, in its cold-blooded instrumental quality, is peculiarly irritating to those unfortunates, as I must think them, who hate all coloratura singing. There is something in the voice that suggests a doll singing, and a good song for her would be "Les oiseaux dans la charmille," the doll's song from the "Contes d'Hoffmann." It is with trembling that I confess to a preference for voices with rather more human feeling in them, for I quite understand that the true coloratura enthusiast will say that this preference proves me to have no real understanding of this kind of singing, that the root of the matter is not in me. A comparison of this record, which is an extremely good one, with that of Mme. Galli-Curci singing the same song would be very instructive from this point of view.

**COLUMBIA.**—L.1471, L.1472.—**New Queen's Hall Light Orchestra, conducted by Alick Maclean. Children's Overture, and Where the Rainbow ends** (Roger Quilter).

This is one of the best reproduced orchestral pieces I have heard. The music is very gay, and the scoring most ingenious and charming. Both grown-up people and children will no doubt get much amusement in identifying the various nursery tunes—"Girls and Boys," "On Paul's Steeple," and the rest—of which the suite is made up.

**VOCALION.**—K.05064, X.9176.—**Regent Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Clarence Raybould. Orchestral Selections from "Lilac Time"** (Schubert-Clutsam).

**VOCALION.**—K.05065, K.05066, K.05067, K.05068.—**Pounds, Heming, Butterworth, etc. Vocal Selections from "Lilac Time"** (Schubert-Clutsam).

There have been published already several records of orchestral selections from "Lilac Time," and it was an excellent idea of the Vocalion Company to issue, beside two records of orchestral selections, other records containing the principal vocal numbers. This is not only the completest, but on the whole the best form in which this charming music is available on the gramophone.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—7-62034.—**Fleta** (Tenor), **Te quiero** (Jota), from "**El Trust de los Tenorios**" (Serrana).

An excellent record of a song from a well-known Spanish *zarzuela*. This *jota* is perhaps not quite so interesting as the recent "Ay, ay, Ay," by the same singer, which is in rather the same manner. I have heard only four of this artist's records, and in all of them have noticed the wonderful *sfumature*. Sen. Fleta has an exquisite voice and the most perfect control of it, but he should take heed that the excessive use of this ornament does not degenerate, as it easily may, into an intolerable mannerism.

**COLUMBIA.**—L.1475, L.1476.—**Symphony Orchestra**, conducted by **Arthur Bliss**; **Conversations** (Bliss). **Anna Thursfield**; **Madam Noy** (Bliss).

The Columbia Company is to be commended for giving the advantages of its admirable technique of recording to some pieces by modern composers. I hope it will continue and give us a great many such pieces. I confess that in this particular case I cannot work up any enthusiasm for the music. It appears to me to be lacking in invention and thoroughly tedious. Without a book of words "**Madam Noy**" is incomprehensible, and with one she is found to be singing notes that have no apparent relation to the meaning of the words.

**COLUMBIA.**—L.1474.—**Norman Allin** (Bass), **The Midnight Review** (Glinka); **Blow! Blow! thou winter wind** (Ketelbey).

Norman Allin is evidently at his best in dramatic songs. His rendering of Glinka's "**Midnight Review**" is excellent, and is sure to be popular. In "**Blow! Blow! thou winter wind**," he shows himself to have a good voice, and his articulation is commendably clear, but the song was an unfortunate choice. Song writers should have some respect for the classics of literature. Here the composer has taken a very familiar lyric from a great poet and has added a little music that makes complete nonsense of it.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.** D.692.—**Mark Hambourg** (Piano). (a) **Suite in A Major** (Blow); (b) **Sonata in B Flat** (Ame). **Etude de Concert in D Flat, No. 3** (Liszt).

I had always thought, judging from Mr. Mark Hambourg's earlier records, that his brilliant technique was one which unfortunately offered insuperable difficulties to adequate reproduction. The banjo-like twang which has always been the great disadvantage of piano records was peculiarly evident in some of the early issues. A record like the present one shows what strides have been taken in the process of the reproduction of the piano tone. It is not absolutely perfect yet, but with a well-chosen soundbox and needle it is extremely good.

I will not go into the question of soundboxes and needles here, since we propose to deal with the subject in the near future. I will only ask readers to communicate their own experiences as to the most suitable combinations for different classes of records. Mr. Mark Hambourg's playing of these charming pieces is masterly, and this is altogether the finest record of his that I have heard.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—2-053209.—**Dame Clara Butt** (Contralto). **Il segreto per esser felice** from "**Lucrezia Borgia**" (Donizetti).

This record, which costs 12/6, may be recommended to admirers of Dame Clara Butt's singing. The reproduction is good. The interpretation and phrasing are to me incomprehensible.

**HIS MASTER'S VOICE.**—7-52225.—**Titta Ruffo** (Baritone). **Chi mi dirà che il bicchier** from "**Marta**" (Flotow).

Titta Ruffo has probably the largest baritone voice in the world, and it is a voice that reproduces superbly—a splendid "gramophone voice." The famous song from "**Marta**" in praise of porter suits him perfectly.

**VOCALION.**—C.01091.—**Lenghi-Cellini** (Tenor). **Ah! non credevi tu** from "**Mignon**" (Thomas).

"Ah! non credevi tu" is a charming and sentimental number from that very romantic opera "**Mignon**." Sig. Lenghi-Cellini emphasises its sentimentality so much that one may almost call the result "sloppy." Still, apart from this, he sings it very well, and this is a good record of by no means a hackneyed song. I would like to point out that the title on the label and in the catalogue, "**Ah! non credea**," is incorrect. "**Ah! non credea**" is a very different aria from a very different opera.

JAMES CASKETT.

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